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May 20, 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE WORKING GROUP (STALIN)

SUBJECT: Conversation with [ ]

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When I saw Phil in New York last Saturday, he expressed the following views:

*Agree*

The transfer of power in the USSR gives no convincing signs so far of serious internal conflicts and none seem likely to develop. All the bits of evidence cited by people like [ ] who take the contrary view have a perfectly plausible interpretation which does not support that view. [ ] is romantically projecting the atmosphere of 1924 into 1953. Malenkov's resignation as Party Secretary need not imply that he has given up any of his basic grip on cadre administration. The shift from prominent mention of Malenkov to anonymity after the first week of the new regime proves no change in Malenkov's actual power position. He may perfectly well prefer to rule anonymously as Stalin did for a number of years and for similar reasons.

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*Agree, partially.*

The stress of "constitutional rights" and reversal on the doctors plot, etc. probably means that the new regime intends to govern with less reliance on capricious terror than Stalin used and is reassuring the bureaucracy accordingly. Such a change could mean a marked improvement in Soviet internal strength.

*Agree, partially.*

The new regime is showing signs of somewhat greater flexibility in foreign affairs, to its advantage and our serious disadvantage. While probably retaining the same basic objectives, they seem to be pursuing them with somewhat more skillful methods than the aging Stalin permitted.

*Disagree*

Publication of Eisenhower's speech in the Soviet press should not be interpreted as any "concession" on the part of the Kremlin. While the speech had clear appeal to the free world and the European captive peoples, its stand on Germany and the liberation of Eastern Europe actually strengthened the Kremlin's hand in relation to the Soviet people.

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